

Mayor Scott Avedisian and Warwick Sewer Authority Executive Director Janine Burke announced today that Warwick Sewer Authority (WSA) staff have been honored with two prestigious awards for their efforts in wastewater treatment.

Gwinlin Cox, Jr. will be presented with the 2008 Rhode Island Operator of the Year Award by the New England Water Environment Association. This honor is bestowed annually upon a person involved in the operations of wastewater treatment facilities in each of the six New England states. It recognizes individuals who have shown a high level of interest and performance in wastewater operations and who have made significant contributions to the wastewater field. Cox has been employed at the WSA since July, 2005 and was promoted in March, 2007 to the rank of Operator III.

Last week, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that the Sewer Authority has been selected as a 2008 Regional EPA Wastewater Treatment Plant Excellence Award recipient.

According to the award letter, the WSA was nominated by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management "to acknowledge all of the fine work that Joel Burke, Superintendent, and his staff have performed in recent years with respect to the operations and maintenance of the City's wastewater treatment facility." The award will be formally presented at a luncheon in Boston on January 28.

"Although wastewater treatment certainly isn't something that most people think about on a daily basis, it's something that is vitally important to the general public safety, and specifically, to the health of our citizens and the environment alike," Avedisian said. "I congratulate Gwin and the entire WSA staff for being recognized by their peers for their excellence and dedication in this regard."

Burke agreed with the Mayor. "Most of our customers probably don't think twice about what happens after they flush," she said. "They don't realize the depth of knowledge and skill that are required to be a wastewater operator in the 21st century."

"Our crew is top-notch, always looking for ways to do things better and more cost-effectively, and it's great for them to be recognized for their efforts, especially by the agencies that regulate us," Burke continued. "Although we have always known that our employees are among the best in their profession, now Superintendent Burke and I can "officially" brag that we have one of the best O&M staffs in New England."